

*C. modestus* is a smaller bird than *R. dieffenbachii*, while the bills of the two are of nearly the same length; but in all Rails the legs and feet attain the full size very early, and long before the bill acquires its full length. *R. dieffenbachii* is also closely related in colour and form to *R. pectoralis*, while the skeleton of *C. modestus* differs largely from that of *R. pectoralis*. It is needless to pursue the subject further, but I must say that it is much to be regretted that the skin of *C. modestus*, which is one of the most curious of New Zealand birds, should have been sent to Dr. Buller, in England, on purpose that it might be figured, and that it has been returned to New Zealand with the remark that it is the young of a bird already figured in his book, and without its having been submitted to Dr. Finsch, who, as Dr. Buller is aware, is engaged on a book on the birds of New Zealand.

ART. XXIV.—*Notes on the New Zealand Wood-hens (Ocydromus).*

By Capt. F. W. HUTTON, C.M.Z.S.

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, 22nd September, 1873.]

1.—*O. troglodytes*, Gml.

The distinguishing marks of this species are its large size, the general olivaceous tint of its plumage, the middle tail-feathers having generally a black streak down the shaft, and the primary feathers of the wing tapering towards the point.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	7·8	4·8	2·0	·83	2·5	2·4
Female ...	6·7	4·4	1·7	·7	2·1	2·15

2.—*O. hectori*, sp. nov.

In size and style of colouring this bird resembles *O. troglodytes*, but its bill is more robust, its general hue is isabella brown, or fawn-coloured; the primary feathers of the wing are rounded at the tip, and the brown bands on the webs are very narrow, sometimes becoming obsolete. The tail is coloured as in *O. troglodytes*.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	7·8	4·8	2·2	·93	2·3	2·2

This species is described from a single specimen only, and more must be obtained before we can feel sure whether it should stand as a separate species, or only as a sub-species of *O. troglodytes*. The specimen was obtained by Mr. Morton, near the Te Anau Lake, in Otago.

3.—*O. australis*, Sparrman.

Distinguished from the two former by its smaller size, the rust-red tint of its plumage, the grey colour of the throat and lower part of the breast (especially in the male bird), the more strongly marked pectoral band, and in the primary feathers of the wing tapering towards the point.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	6·5	4·4	1·7	·69	2·0	2·0
Female ...	6·7	4·4	1·8	·68	2·0	2·0

The middle tail-feathers are generally barred, but this is very variable. Except by the size, this species is not always easy to recognize from *O. troglodytes*, and it is possible that it may prove to be a variety of it.

4.—*O. fuscus*, Du Bus.

Distinguished by its dark colour, the absence of any markings on the tail, by the inner webs only of the primaries being either sparingly marked with dull ferruginous, or without spots, and by their being rounded at the point.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	7·4	4·8	2·0	·84	2·3	2·3
Female ...	6·5	4·6	2·0	·82	2·15	2·1

In the young bird the primaries are acutely pointed, and both webs are banded with ferruginous, but the bands do not extend to the shaft. The general plumage also is much lighter, the feathers being margined with yellowish ferruginous, and the tail-feathers spotted with the same colour. In this state it is not easy to distinguish from the adult of the next species. This species appears to be confined to the south coast of Otago, on the western side of the Alps.

5.—*O. finschi*, sp. nov.

Throat, abdomen, and thighs dark brownish grey; feathers of the rest of the body brownish black, with spots of yellowish ferruginous on the outer margins of each web. Under tail-coverts, and feathers of the flanks banded with yellowish ferruginous. Primary feathers of the wing acutely pointed, brownish black, banded on each web with dull ferruginous; secondaries with yellowish ferruginous spots on the margins of each web. Middle tail-feathers brownish black, the outer ones with spots of yellowish ferruginous on the margins of the webs. Bill dark brown, getting reddish towards the base of the lower mandible. Legs brownish red.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	7·7	5·0	1·9	·8	2·35	2·25
Female ...	6·35	4·6	1·7	·64	2·1	2·0

5a.—*Variety* or *immature*.

The light-coloured markings on the feathers larger, passing into marginal

bands. Spots on the secondaries ferruginous. Middle tail-feathers marked like the others. This species appears to be confined to the southern parts of Otago, on the eastern side of the Alps, from Te Anau Lake to the southern slopes of the Takitimu Mountains. It differs from *O. fuscus* in the markings of the wings and tail, and in the shape of the primaries. From *O. troglodytes* it differs in its general colouration, and in its smaller size. It may possibly be identical with *Gallirallus brachypterus*, Lafresnaye.

6.—*O. earli*, Gray.

Distinguished by its rusty brown back and grey abdomen. The primary feathers of the wing are, in the adult male, rounded at the point and banded with ferruginous on the inner web only; but in the adult female they are more or less banded on both webs and rounded at the tip. In the young bird they are marked as in the female, but are acutely pointed at the tip. The tail is without mark in both sexes and at all ages.

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe, without claw.
Male ...	6·6	3·9	1·8	·67	2·2	2·1
Female ...	6·0	3·25	1·8	·67	2·2	2·0

This species is confined to the North Island.

ART. XXV.—*Notes on the Ornithology of New Zealand.*

By WALTER L. BULLER, D.Sc., F.L.S., etc.

[Read before the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, 4th December, 1873.]

THE last volume of the Transactions contains an interesting paper by Dr. Otto Finsch, of Bremen, under the title of "Remarks on some Birds of New Zealand," which was read before the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury on the 5th June, 1872.\*

In this paper Dr. Finsch, after mentioning an exhaustive article on the subject which he had prepared for the "Journal für Ornithologie," proceeds to state, for the information of his ornithological friends in New Zealand, "the most important facts" discovered by him before communicating them to the German periodical.

As, however, the critical remarks which Dr. Finsch has embodied in his paper appear to me to deal in many cases rather with assumptions than with "facts," and as the further discussion of debateable points may benefit science, I beg to lay before the Society the following brief notes in reply.

\* Trans. N.Z. Inst., Vol. V., pp. 206—212.